
The Pongo Papers



By
**Lord
Alfred
Douglas**

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Illustrated.

THE PONGO PAPERS

AND

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

THE
PONGO PAPERS
AND
THE DUKE OF BERWICK

BY
LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID WHITELOW



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PREFACE

SOME sort of explanation seems advisable as to the reasons for the appearance of this book of rhymes. Now-a-days it is apparently required of an author that he should give reasons for doing anything at all different from what he or others have done before. About a year ago, I ventured to publish a volume of rhymes entitled *The Placid Pug*, and I ventured, with the advice of the publishers, to issue it as an illustrated book, and to allow it to appear at or about Christmas. But it appears that I ought

PREFACE

not to have done this. Illustrated books which appear in the Christmas season are, I gather, considered the property of children, and my book was not a book for children, (the publishers of the book actually went to the length of enclosing a printed notice to that effect with every copy that was sent for review,) and my book was therefore a source of annoyance in some cases, of anger in others. Most of the critics who reviewed my book treated it in the very kindest manner, and some of them praised it in an altogether extravagant manner; others were less enthusiastic, and one gentleman in the *Saturday Review*, said that "no child would trouble to read it," which seemed to me rather unkind. Not unkind because I wished it to be read by

PREFACE

children, but unkind because it seemed to imply that the gentleman in question had ignored the message which my publisher has endeavoured to convey to intending critics.

There is, as all readers of the advertisements on the hoardings of railway stations and building-plots, and the front-sheets of daily newspapers are aware, a soap which will not wash clothes, and when I read that cruel comment on my book I felt much as the proprietors of that soap would have felt had they submitted it to a soap-expert, and had that soap-expert, after prolonged and careful examination of the soap, summed up his opinion in the words, "No clothes could ever be washed by this soap."

PREFACE

Now all this only shows how very careful one ought to be to explain carefully and accurately what a book is intended to be, if it is at all different from the average book, and it behoves me to endeavour to make it as clear as possible that this book, *The Pongo Papers*, is a book of nonsense rhymes. Now I make no pretence to be an authority on nonsense rhymes, and my knowledge of them is confined to a very limited area. I am not aware of the existence of any nonsense rhymes in the English language before those of Edward Lear. Edward Lear wrote perhaps the most perfect specimens of the nonsense verse, from the point of view of nonsense. Where he failed was in form. In that respect he is easily out-classed by Lewis Carroll and

PREFACE

by Sir W. S. Gilbert. As the most perfect nonsense rhyme ever written I should be inclined to name the rhyme in *Alice through the Looking-Glass*.

“I sent a message to the fish,
I told them this is what I wish.

“The little fishes of the sea
They sent an answer back to me.

“The little fishes’ answer was :
‘We cannot do it, sir, because.’”

and so on. It is quite perfect, it is absolute nonsense, untainted by the least trace of satire or parody or caricature. This is one of the most difficult things in the world to attain to, and I may say at once that I have not attempted to do it, either in the “Pongo Papers” or in the “Duke of Ber-

PREFACE

wick." The latter approaches much nearer to pure nonsense than the former, but it is distinctly tainted with satire. While the "Pongo Papers" are almost pure satire, and only escape being classed as satire altogether by the fact that their subject matter is nonsensical.

I once wrote a book of real pure nonsense; it was called *Tails with a Twist*, and achieved great successes, among them the flattering but (to me) not altogether satisfactory one of being very closely imitated by Mr. Hilaire Belloc, in a book which he called the *Bad Child's Book of Beasts*. This book actually appeared before *Tails with a Twist*, but most of the rhymes contained in my book had been written at least two years before Mr. Belloc's, and

PREFACE

were widely known and quoted at Oxford where Mr. Belloc was my contemporary, and in other places. I have no grievance against Mr. Belloc—as I have already said, his imitation of my rhymes was flattering, and it was quite legitimate. But as I have been constantly accused of plagiarising Mr. Belloc's rhymes, I take this opportunity of stating exactly how things happened. But to return to my point, these rhymes were pure nonsense rhymes. Those I have written since have become less and less purely nonsensical. Partly I regret it, partly I recognise that it is the inevitable result of the development which is inherent in every art. The desire to be more sophisticated and to show off technical accomplishment has

PREFACE

gradually superseded the original devotion to what I still recognise as the higher form of nonsense. I claim for *The Pongo Papers* (and also for *The Placid Pug*) that they are by far the most elaborate nonsense rhymes that have ever been attempted. I have devoted as much time and trouble, and fundamental brain-work to their production, as I have ever done to writing sonnets, and though I will not say they were as difficult to write as sonnets, I will say that they were very nearly as difficult. This is the excuse for their existence. If they were pure nonsense rhymes they would need no excuse. Being a hybrid article they need the excuse of elaborate technical perfection to justify them. I am quite aware that

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these rhymes simply irritate some people, and I am not going to make the foolish mistake of charging people with a lack of sense of humour because they don't care for them; nothing is so impossible to define as the sense of humour.

Some people, for whose judgment I have the greatest respect, and whose praise is the breath of life to me, have said to me, "How can you, who have written real and beautiful poetry in *The City of the Soul*, waste your talents on writing nonsense rhymes?" Now, with all due deference to these critics, I take leave to say that this seems to me very much like saying to a playwright, "How can you, who have written such fine tragedies, waste your talents on writing

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comedies?" It is not, perhaps, quite strictly a fair analogy, but it is near enough to serve as an illustration of my point of view. I am not one of those who think that because a man has written good poetry, it becomes a sacred duty for him to go on writing it all the rest of his life. There is hardly a poet who has ever lived who has not written far too much. Poor Keats would turn in his grave if he could see Mr. Buxton Forman's complete edition of his works, and if he were suddenly restored to life his first step, I am sure, would be to demand its suppression, and to destroy all traces of at least two-thirds of it; leaving only the supreme and perfect pieces which are the absolute crown and summit, not

PREFACE

only of his own work, but of all English poetry. One should only write poetry when one has something definite to say, and something, moreover, that cannot possibly be said in prose. Writing nonsense rhymes has no effect one way or the other on one's ability or desire to write poetry. It simply has nothing to do with it at all. But people who think it is very easy, or that any one with a tolerable knowledge of versification and an ordinary educated vocabulary could do it if he took the trouble, had better try.

ALFRED DOUGLAS.

P.S.—All the rhymes in the "Pongo Papers" appeared in *Vanity Fair*, to whose editor I am indebted for permission

PREFACE

to reprint them. "The Duke of Berwick" appeared in 1900, with some very clever illustrations by "Tony Ludovici," but, owing to the failure of its publisher within a week of the issue of the book, it never had a real life as a book at all. My reason for reproducing it is that I have found that there is a very large demand for the text.

ALFRED DOUGLAS.

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THE PONGO PAPERS

THE PONGO PAPERS consist principally of a reprint of a controversy which was carried on in the columns of the *East Sheen Gazette and Balham Independent* (with which is incorporated the *Clapham Cuckoo and Mice*) between those celebrated publicists Professor Percival Pondersfoot Pongo, regius Professor of Swiss in the University of Liptonville, U.S.A., and the well-known critic who hides his modest identity under the world-renowned pseudonym "The Belgian Hare." The letters which passed between these two giants of ornithological knowledge are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the aforementioned journal, in consequence of repeated prayers, entreaties and threats from various influential readers, and in consideration of certain cash payments. Any one desiring any further information as to the meaning of these letters, and evidences of the *bona fides* of the parties to the controversy, can obtain the same by applying at the offices of the *East Sheen Gazette and Balham Independent* on deposit of a

THE PONGO PAPERS

guarantee fee of five guineas (£5 5), it being understood that the said fee is to be forfeited in case the inquiries are considered frivolous or otherwise objectionable. The Editor's decision on this point is in all cases to be considered final. No applications will be entertained from minors.

THE OSTRICH

[Being a reply from "The Belgian Hare" to some remarks recently made by Professor Pongo in the course of his biennial lecture at the University of Liptonville, U.S.A., in which he compared one of his opponents on the governing body of that seat of learning to the "fond and foolish ostrich who imagines that by hiding his head in the sand, or behind a bush, he can elude his hunters, whereas in reality he is only blinding himself to his own obvious danger."]

I

THE Ostrich, fortified by common sense
And strong in every tactical resource,
When he perceives the enemy in force

THE PONGO PAPERS

Conceals his head behind a bush (or
fence),
And leaves affairs to take their natural
course.

II

This brilliant, because obvious, device
Has drawn upon him the contempt of
fools
Whose ignorance of all strategic rules
Would leave them helpless with a cocka-
trice
And paralysed before a pack of mules.

III

The Ostrich and his friends can well
afford
To hear with silent scorn the quaint
recital

THE OSTRICH

Of the mob's views. There's really
nothing vital
In the reproach of fools, and (praise the
Lord !)
It is, as Blake observes, a Kingly
title.¹

IV

But when a *savant* like Professor Pongo—
A scholar of advanced (if narrow)
culture,
The author of "The Life-force of the
Vulture,"
A man whose recent *trouvaille* in the
Congo
Has revolutionised Leporiculture,

¹ "Listen to the fool's reproach. It is a Kingly title" (Wm. Blake).

THE PONGO PAPERS

V

Who, at an age when most young men
at college
Have views on life less grave than
Lady Teazle's,
Had finished the first part of "Walks
with Weasels,"
And told us the last word in Ferret-
knowledge—
Becomes infected with these mental
measles,

VI

His best admirer can but shake his
head
And own that Providence ordains
things darkly.

THE OSTRICH

If the Professor is not raving starkly
He must be ill and ought to be in bed.
Or has he never heard of Bishop
Berkeley?

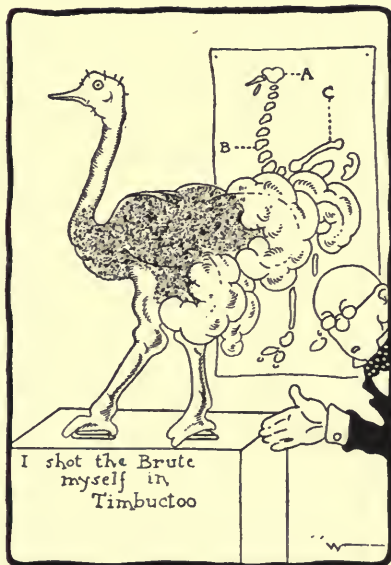
VII

Meanwhile the Ostrich, unaffected by
The echoes of this Professorial chatter,
Continues by his attitude to shatter
The "reasoning" of those who would
deny
The perfect subjectivity of matter.

THE BELGIAN HARE.

THE OSTRICH

(A Reply from Professor Pongo)



THE OSTRICH

(A Reply from Professor Pongo)

I

SIR, your contributor, the Belgian Hare,
A youth, I take it, fresh from school
or college,
(And, by the way, what did they teach
him there?),
Is pleased to credit me with Ferret
knowledge
Far beyond that which falls to my poor
share.

THE PONGO PAPERS

II

My "*trouvaille*," as he calls it (why not
find?),

Has scarcely caused a "revolution"
yet,

Nor is its application so designed,

Though it may modify the Leveret—
The Belgian Hare is really much too
kind.

III

Nor do I claim to be a "*savant*;" no,
If (in the intervals of "mental measles")
I have, perhaps, been privileged to throw
Some humble light upon the ways of
weasels,

I still must say "I think," and not "I
know."

THE OSTRICH

IV

But when it comes to Ostriches, I stand
Upon quite different ground; and so
with fences,
With trees and bushes, or a stretch of
sand;
That these exist I *know*, because my
senses
Have, to impart that knowledge, so been
planned.

V

Before me stands an Ostrich, dead and
stuffed
(I shot the brute myself in Timbuctoo);
It hid its head behind the usual tuft,
Thinking, no doubt, my spectacles of blue
Betrayed a disposition to be "bluffed."

THE PONGO PAPERS

VI

(Whence comes, I wonder, the absurd
conviction,
Dear to the minds of the untutored
classes,
That men and women with a predilection
For safe-guarding their eyesight with
blue glasses
Can be deceived by any obvious fiction?)

VII

Blue glasses may disguise a great detective.)
But pardon me this "Professorial
chatter,"
And to resume: My bullet proved effective;
It killed the bird, and thereby proved
that matter
Is, shall we say, not wholly un-objective?

THE OSTRICH

VIII

The Belgian Hare inquires, with coruscation,

If I have heard of Berkeley. Let me see,

I seem to know the name *and reputation*.

But has the Bishop ever heard of me?

A much more interesting speculation.

PERCIVAL PONDERSFOOT PONGO.

THE OSTRICH



THE OSTRICH

I

PROFESSOR PONGO'S laboured modesty,
And his inveterate determination
To underrate the services which he
Has done to science by the publication
Of his famed works, do not impose on me.

II

The greatest living specialist in ferrets
Adopts the stale stump-orator device
Of deprecating his own obvious merits,
And thereby hoping to "send up the
price"
Of unsound reasoning. It damps one's
spirits

THE PONGO PAPERS

III

To find a person of Herr Pongo's worth
Indulging in that form of idiocy
Which makes the date of his opponent's
birth

The basis of a childish repartee.
Teutonic "wit" does not conduce to
mirth!

IV

The slipshod fault of using such a word
As "Brute" when speaking of an
animal

So purely and essentially a *Bird*
As the wild ostrich is, is typical
Of the Professor's logic. As absurd

THE OSTRICH

V

Is his ridiculous and crude suggestion
That the fact that his "bullet proved
effective"

In the remotest way bears on the question
Of whether matter is, or not, subjective.

Such bosh would give an ostrich indigestion.

VI

I really don't propose to criticise
His cryptic utterance on Bishop Berkeley;
Is this more humour in Teutonic guise?
Or is Herr Pongo merely hinting darkly
What I for one would hear without surprise,

THE PONGO PAPERS

VII

That he has definitely joined the rank
Of those who disbelieve in future life?
Is this the latest Professorial prank?
At any rate, if such a view is rife
Herr Pongo only has himself to thank.

THE BELGIAN HARE.

THE NATIONALITY OF PROFESSOR PONGO



THE
NATIONALITY
OF PROFESSOR
PONGO

I

SIR, I have neither time nor energy
To fill the nescience of the Belgian
Hare
With elements of sane philosophy ;
Nor, if I had them, would I greatly
care
To grapple with an "unknown quantity."

II

The Belgian Hare resents my reference
To what I took to be his tender
years ;

THE PONGO PAPERS

I judged him youthful by his lack of
sense.

If I was wrong in this, as it appears,
So much the worse for his intelligence.

III

Shakespeare has told us that "an old
hoar hare "

Is recommendable as Lenten food.¹
(Presumably as penitential fare.)

But I prefer a young one. Is this
rude?

Perhaps it is, but really I don't care.

¹ "An old hoar hare! an old hoar hare!
Is very good food in Lent" (Shakespeare).

PROFESSOR PONGO

IV

There's always hope for youth; but if
ripe age

Has not brought sense to your
contributor,

I greatly fear that he has reached the stage

When he must be adjudged "past
praying for,"

A painful period in Life's pilgrimage.

V

I am not anxious to discuss with him

The subject of his puerile delusions,

To do so I should be obliged to swim

Through seas of fallacies and false
conclusions

Which it would take me days merely to
skim.

THE PONGO PAPERS

VI

On one point only I would "pick a bone :"

He has the very gross impertinence
To write my name-style as "*Herr*
Pongo," shown.

Why so? On what conceivable pre-
tence?

Since when has Pongo to be German
grown?

VII

Its sound proclaims its English origin,
And, by authentic legends, it appears
That Pongos have been settled in East
Lynne

For rather more than seven hundred
years.

The name was formerly pronounced *Pig-kin*.

PROFESSOR PONGO

VIII

With this and *Pink-eyne* there's an
obvious link,

And *Percival de Pink-eye* we can
trace

(So called, of course, because his eyes
were pink)

Was wounded in the fray of Chevy
Chase

(The ear-lobe punctured by a dart, I
think).

[Exigencies of space have here reluctantly compelled us to omit seventeen stanzas in which Professor Pongo traces the gradual corruption of the name de Pink-eye into Pongo, and also his explanation of the fact that though the family of Pink-eye or Pongo emigrated to Germany in the seventeenth century, and his (the Professor's) father was actually born in Berlin, the family always retained its essentially British, not to say Saxon, characteristics, which were emphasised by the marriage

THE PONGO PAPERS

in 1825 of Professor Pongo's father to the beautiful and accomplished Miss Hartman, only child of that distinguished merchant and financier Mr. Isaac Abraham Hartman, a partner in the well-known British firm of Mosenthal, Hartman and Gibbs. We proceed to the 26th and last stanza.—ED.]

XXVI

Quite early in the nineteenth century

We find the name, spelt in the
modern way

As *Pongo*, in the East Lynne registry,

Where my respected parents, one fine
day,

Were married by the Reverend Lovejoy
Lee.

PERCIVAL PONDERSFOT PONGO.

PROFESSOR
PONGO
AGAIN



PROFESSOR
PONGO
AGAIN

I

PROFESSOR PONGO foiled in argument,
And conscious of the weakness of his
case,
In his anxiety to "save his face,"
Has most incontinently given vent
To violent language which would not
disgrace
A Peri at the gates of Parliament.

II

But while he so intemperately girds
At my "delusions," while his angry mood
Breaks out in ravings about "lenten food"

THE PONGO PAPERS

And "unknown quantities" of furious
words,

He is extremely careful to elude
Any remarks on ostriches *quâ* birds.

III

This being so, I make bold to assume
That he has nothing further to
advance ;

Then why this vast display of petu-
lance ?

Why this propensity to foam and fume ?

No one requires the elephant to
dance,

Or looks for comic singing to the
Pume.

PROFESSOR PONGO AGAIN

IV

(I mean the Puma, but the rhyme compels
Some small poetic licence here and
there)

Professor Pongo has received his share
Of Nature's choicest gifts. But Nature
sells

Her gifts at a high price (which don't
seem fair ;
But Nature *is* unfair, experience tells).

V

The price paid in Professor Pongo's case
Amounts to this : a serious limitation
In the intrinsic powers of observation,
Amounting to sheer impotence to trace
Inter-phenomenal co-allocation,
As of the nasal organ and the face.

THE PONGO PAPERS

VI

Mention of noses somehow seems to
bear on

Professor Pongo's precious pedigree.

Whether the famous Pink-eye family
tree

Is rooted in the land that fostered Aaron

Or Germany or England or all three,

Take my advice, *Herr* Pongo, "keep
your *hair* on."

THE BELGIAN HARE.

THE LOBSTER



THE LOBSTER

[Being a specimen chapter selected from Professor Pongo's epoch-making work, "The Principles of Retrocessional Progression; or, Why not advance backwards?" which has produced such a soul-stirring effect in the United States of America. It was of this book that President Roosevelt is reported to have said, "It knocks spots off Socrates."]

I

THE Lobster in his search for primal
truth,

Scorning convention and the beaten
track,

And yearning to imbed his mental tooth
Deep in the tree of knowledge, turns
his back

On the accepted codes that guide raw
youth,

Into the usual channels of attack.

THE PONGO PAPERS

II

Determined to command enforced success
And capture triumph in the last long lap,
Not by the facile arts of speciousness,
Nor by the vulgar methods of clap-trap,
He has devised to make his gait no less
Than a designed, deliberate handicap.

III

While all the world walks forward (save
the crab,
Whose side-long walk stands in a
class apart,
As must be obvious to the meanest Dab),
The Lobster cultivates the curious art
Of moving backward like a hansom cab
When the reluctant horse declines to
start.

THE LOBSTER

IV

And if we ask the "why" of this
retreat,
The "wherefore" of this retrograde
progression,
The *locus standi* of this rearward beat,
The cause of this deliberate recession,
The answer is that Duty guides his feet,
And Duty is the Lobster's chief
obsession.

V

Though Love and Life and Pleasure
urge him on,
And strive to lure him down the
forward road,

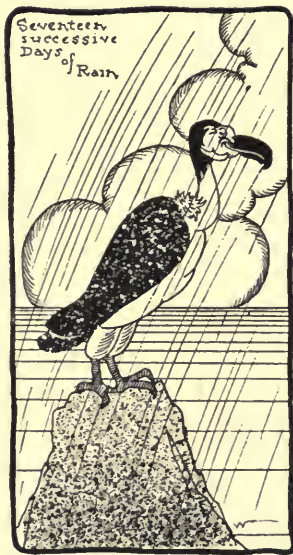
THE PONGO PAPERS

And every word in Youth's bright lexicon
Sings in his ear and spurs him like a
goad,
Suggesting many a fond comparison
With forward-moving beasts from
Teal to Toad,

VI

He perseveres and treads the narrow
track,
Though Shrimp and Sprat and
Haddock scoff and jeer ;
To find perfected Truth he still falls
back
On that strategic movement to the rear,
Which Duty points him out, and bears
his pack
In Virtue's path a cheerful pioneer.

THE CORMORANT



THE CORMORANT

(“A Sea-Bird’s Ways : An Inquiry into the Habits of the Cormorant,” illustrated by numerous photographs from life, by Percival Pongo, M.A., F.R.G.S., Regius Professor of Swiss at the University of Liptonville, U.S.A., author of “Ferretiana,” “Walks with Weasels,” &c., &c.)

I

THE marked supremacy which in all
mundane spheres

Attends the efforts of the Cormorant,
The fine and healthy progeny he rears,
His general immunity from want,
And that contended aspect which appears
Fixed on his face as though in
adamant ;

THE PONGO PAPERS

II

His sleek *ensemble* of beak and wing
and feather,

The small amount of water he displaces,
Whereby he swims in what seem altogether
Unnavigable shallows and sea-spaces,
His calm acceptance, in unpleasant
weather,

Of all the damp discomfort that he faces ;

III

His breezy optimism when his nest
Is swamped by billows from the
angry main,

Or when quite swept away, the cheerful zest

With which he quickly builds it up again,
His genial humour even undepressed

By seventeen successive days of rain :

THE CORMORANT

IV

All these and many other happy *traits*
Which place him in the ranks of the *élite*,
Are in Professor Pongo's "Sea-Bird's
Ways"

Attributed to pre-organic heat,
To nitric acid and the Roentgen rays,
Combined with the possession of web-
feet!

V

This coarse materialistic explanation
Of the *morale* of an unrivalled bird
May satisfy the muddled congregation,
Who recently applauded when they heard
The learned author's lecture on
"gyration"—

Surely the *dernier mot* of the absurd.

THE PONGO PAPERS

VI

But no man of intelligence will fail
 (For all its cleverness) to realise
That the proverbial *salt* upon the tail
 Of the professor's cormorant supplies
Some needful *grains* to those who
 would regale
 Their minds on his fantastic theories.

VII

Professor Pongo has his obvious merits,
 And we should be the last to cast a stone
At one who so abundantly inherits
 The mantle of the gifted "Gramophone."¹
He is the first authority on ferrets,
 But he should leave the Cormorant alone.

THE BELGIAN HARE.

¹ "Gramophone," the *nom de guerre* of a recently deceased well-known writer on natural history.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

A Nonsense Rhyme



THE DUKE OF BERWICK

A Nonsense Rhyme

THE Duke of Berwick lived at Castle
Ban,

He was a very upright nobleman.

His moral tone was wonderfully high,

His principles were rigid, this was why

He seldom went to town, and looked
askance

At those who wintered in the south of
France.

The moral tone was lax in either place,

And this was very painful to His
Grace.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

At first in London he had tried to be
A purifier of Society,
He swore to make it good, or, failing this,
At least to show with studied emphasis
His constant scorn of vice and dis-
approval.

This he effected by the prompt removal
Of his own person from whatever place
Was occupied by those who shocked
His Grace.

He and the Duchess always turned their
backs

On those whose conduct was the least
bit lax.

Where'er they went they waved a moral
banner,

And constantly left rooms "in a marked
manner."

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

To bring their disapproval home to
sinners,

They very often didn't go to dinners
To which they had accepted invitations,
And this in time gave rise to irritations
In those who were the objects of their
snubs.

The Duke, too, used to snort in
London clubs,

And frown in restaurants when people
whom

He disapproved of came into the room.

Their social sphere thus daily grew
more small,

And soon they scarcely knew a soul at
all.

They moved from Grosvenor Square to
near Soho,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Hoping to find the moral tone less low.
'Twas all in vain, the tone was just the
same,

Or worse, if anything, and so they
came

And lived in Scotland in the Ducal
seat,

And cultivated hay and oats and wheat.

The Duke possessed a breed of spotted
cows

And several magnificent bow-wows.

He went in, too, for breeding Persian
drakes,

And had three lakes for water-snakes
and hakes,

He had besides a lot of Arab mares

And several hundred thousand Belgian
hares.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

All manly sports he loved, he often
rose

At half-past six to play at dominoes.

He had a chess-board and two croquet
grounds,

And hunted his own pack of Truffle
hounds,

And so he led a simple pastoral life,
Surrounded by his children and his
wife.

The Duke had seven children, three were
girls,

The rest were boys. They all had flaxen
curls.

The eldest two were twins, the Lady
Barbara

And the first boy, the Earl of Candela-
labra.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

They were as like each other as two
cats,

And unmistakable aristocrats.

The Duke, their father, loved these
children best,

He gave them more to eat than all the
rest,

And twice as much to drink, and better
clothes,

Covered with loops and lace and furbelows,
And ostrich feathers and East Indian
silks ;

Whereas the other noble little Bilks
(Bilk was the family name), though not
neglected,

Were seldom individually selected
For their Papa's caresses, why was this?
Was it because their Aunt Semiramis

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

*Lived in Jamaica, while their Uncle James
Preferred in town to carry on his games?*

Or was it—Nay, what use to speculate
On the inscrutable decrees of Fate,
Or seek to lift the veil? Enough to
know,

As I have said before, that it was so,
As well to ask why in the topmost garret
The Duchess kept a red and yellow
parrot,

Why she spoke low to it, and gave it
cake,

And scratched it with an odd-shaped kind
of rake,

What was the meaning of its curious
cries,

And why it was kept close from prying
eyes ;

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Was it that it had learnt beyond the sea
Language that would have staggered a
bargee,

Unfitted for the ears of those refined?
Or were there other reasons? Never
mind.

The twins were taught and educated by
A gentleman whose mild cerulean eye
Beamed with intelligence, or flashed and
fired

According to the sentiment required;
His name was Briggs, he was a long, lithe
man,

And much beloved by all at Castle
Ban.

He taught them every kind of useful
thing

From Agriculture to the Highland Fling.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Billiards and Pool he taught three times a
week,

On Monday, too, he often taught them
Greek

From half-past nine till ten and even
later,

And on the map he showed them the
equator

Three times a day or more, for several
years ;

He also pointed out the hemispheres,
And taught them on the map to under-
stand

The difference between the sea and
land.

His theory was that minds in early youth
Must be impressed with some essential
truth,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Such as that two added to two makes
four,

And never any less or any more.

“Once that is learnt,” he often used to
say,

“The rest will follow, as the night the
day.”

He also thought that every child should
learn

His right hand from his left hand to
discern.

“Suppose,” he used to say, “you see a
Notice,

*The left-hand pathway leads to where a
goat is,*

The right to several lions and a snake,

How do you know which path you
ought to take

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Unless in early youth you've mastered
quite

Which is the left-hand side and which
the right?"

He always taught by kindness, not by
fear,

And so his punishments were not
severe.

He seldom struck the twins with knives
or stones,

Or banged their front teeth or their
funny-bones.

He hardly ever hung them by their
heels,

Or left them many days without their
meals,

Or bent their thumbs, or smeared their
hair with mortar,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Or held their heads for long under the
water.

He had one pleasant plan, he kept a
lot

Of oats and sugar-plums in a large
pot ;

And by this clever scheme he quickly
lent

More emphasis to praise or punish-
ment ;

For when they answered right he gave
a sweet,

And when they answered wrong he gave
them wheat.

In playtime, too, he was the life and
soul

Of all their games ; he'd black himself
with coal,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Or stripe his face with green, or red, or
blue,

And jump out at them like a kangaroo.
Of tricks and clever ways he was quite
full,

He very often bellowed like a bull.

And sometimes, too, this learned man
would stoop

For their delight to dance the cock-a-
hoop.

This graceful dance he had acquired
with care

By watching those who danced it every-
where.

In early youth he sojourned in Peru,

And learnt the steps from a Silesian
Jew ;

And he had added other steps to these

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

In Anaconda and the Hebrides ;
He saw it danced in Bechuanaland,
And also on the Rand and in the
Strand.

When Barbara was very ill with measles,
He cheered her up with marmosets and
weasels,

And told her tales of Malta and Hong-
Kong,

And sang *God save the King* the whole
night long,

And dyed his hair with pink and indigo,
No wonder that the children loved him so.

The younger children had a governess,
French, and a member of the old,
“noblesse.”

She had a curious name, it rhymes with
Sarah,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Her name was Mademoiselle de la
Ponghèra.

She taught the children Dutch and
Japanese,

And Irish cookery and Portuguese,
And all the minor arts, and anæsthetics,
And Swiss designs, and knitting and
athletics.

In the gymnasium it would make you
sing

To see her do back circle and hock
swing.

She also could kick high and pirouette,
And danced the Can-can and the Minuet.

The Duke and Duchess loved to see
her dance,

For they had spent their honeymoon in
France.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

And so their peaceful life went on for
years,

The Duke was happy, for he had no
fears

As to his children, while that peerless
pair,

Briggs and Ponghèra, had them in their
care.

He often thought of the propitious day
When Providence had put them in his
way.

His meeting with Ponghèra had been
thus,

He had observed her in an omnibus ;
Her high and dome-like forehead, and
her air

Of open frankness when she paid her
fare,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Had much impressed him, her back hair
alone

Served to convince him she had moral
tone,

Her character he knew could own no
blot,

And so the Duke engaged her on the
spot.

That very evening, shortly before dark,
He came across Briggs preaching in the
Park ;

For half-an-hour he heard that learned
gent,

Who every moment grew more eloquent.
The Duke was moved to tears, and gave
a pound

To the collection when the hat went
round ;

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Without a single moment's hesitation
He offered him the tutor's situation.
The noble Briggs responded to the
call,
Relinquishing the Mission to Bengal,
To which his efforts had so long been
lent,
He felt that Duty called him, so he
went.

.
One summer's day (the twins were then
fifteen),
Just as the cabbages were getting
green,
And when the pelicans and wrens and
owls
Were just beginning their biennial
prowls,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

While the young calico was turning
white,

And weathercocks were veering to the
right,

Into the bay o'erlooked by Castle Ban

A narrow, rakish-looking schooner ran,

An evil-looking craft of omen dire,

Sir Henry Ashton's yacht, *The Black
Maria!*

Up to the house Sir Henry Ashton
came,

Also his uncle, I forget his name.

Sir Henry Ashton was then twenty-
two,

His step was light and gay, his tie was
blue,

His boots were yellow and his waistcoat
green,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

His hair was brushed, his hands were
fairly clean.

Beside him walked his uncle, short and
spare,

With something of a sanctimonious air.

He had great wealth (acquired, I think,
by beer),

And when he saw the Duke he seemed
to *sneer*.

Why did he sneer, why did he come
at all

With his spruce nephew to the Ducal
hall?

What were they doing? Well, it seems
his Grace

Had asked them on a visit to the place.
And so they came and stayed a week
or so,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

And went away,—and then there came
a blow.

The usher Briggs quite suddenly one
morning

Just after breakfast gave the Duchess
warning.

He utterly declined all explanation,
But seemed a prey to fearful agita-
tion.

A fortnight later the good man de-
parted,

Leaving the children almost broken-
hearted.

Ten days went by, again their hearts
were rent,

For Mademoiselle de la Ponghèra went.
Summoned to give her evidence im-
partial

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Before the judges of a French court-
martial ;

She promised to return, but oh ! alack,
The proud Ponghèra never could come
back.

Her past career, it seems, was more
than shady,

She was in fact the original " veiled lady,"
And evidence transpired that seemed to
show

She was the author of the *bordereau*.

And ah ! that I must say it in this
rhyme,

That peerless woman is now " doing
time."

Another blow was waiting for his Grace,
Briggs, too, was mixed up in the Drey-
fus case.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

The reason of his flight was now made
plain,

He had delivered documents to Spain.

These painful matters caused immense
distress

To the poor Duke ; he ate a good deal
less.

He lost all taste for oysters, shrimps,
and crabs,

And lived almost entirely on dabs.

He gave up playing dominoes and
chess,

And daily grew more careless in his
dress.

The whole establishment went to the
dogs,

The footmen stumped about the floor in
clogs.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

The Butler seemed at times to go quite
mad,

The cooking got abominably bad,
Nobody brushed the floors or made the
beds,

And all the servants seemed to lose their
heads.

And so affairs went on from bad to
worse,

The Duke grew pale, and gloomy as a
hearse.

His language, too, was terrible to hear,
And made the younger children quake
with fear.

The Duchess pined and dwindled day
by day,

And always dressed in mauve or iron-
grey,

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

Which added to the general depression.

The whole house seemed to feel a dull obsession.

More troubles came, the second daughter
Mary

Was badly pecked by an escaped canary.

A fortnight later her young brother
Mark

Was bitten by a lion in the Park.

Henry and Jack, while running with
some beagles,

Were badly mauled by two heraldic
eagles.

A Belgian hare went mad and bit the
twins,

And Susan fell upstairs and broke her
shins.

THE DUKE OF BERWICK

That settled it, the Duke packed up his
trunk,

And the whole party quickly "took their
bunk."

They sailed at once to far Afghanistan,
And paid a long adieu to Castle Ban.

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